like a plan or scheme for forming it; and both Smyth and Stratford lamented that such a desideratum was not promptly and substantially adopted. I ventured to remark that it was a subject I had often meditated on, and that I had, at one time, penned something of a prospectus, expressly on the subject, and if they would breakfast with me the next morning I would show them what I had written, or at all events explain my opinions on, and wishes to see, a practical society formed to promote and give additional interest to the science of geography. Five of our friends assembled the next morning, when resolutions were passed and written down; and I volunteered to act as secretary *pro tem.*, and write a more matured prospectus than the one I had previously and hastily prepared, and that it should be submitted to each person then present for comment, improvement, and adoption. I had it set up in type, and sent a copy to each gentleman. They were returned with various suggestions, &c., and a proof combining the whole was sent to the printer: revised proofs were soon provided, and clean copies sent to the same parties. One of them was shown to Mr. Barrow, secretary to the Admiralty, who soon manifested not only angry hostility to the scheme, but wrote intemperate letters to one or two of the officers who were and are connected with the Admiralty. The language used by the secretary was very irritating to the gentlemen he addressed, and it was feared that serious consequences might ensue. A meeting of our preliminary committee assembled, and it was agreed that the prospectus should be issued, and an appeal made to the public, to ascertain who were willing to co-operate in forming a new society therein explained. The secretary, who was prompt, peremptory, and resolute, instead of asking the advice and aid of friends, issued a prospectus, named a committee, and told the public that such a society was formed, and invited members to join it.

Too much engrossed with the literary works I had in hand, I did not feel disposed to enter the field. I declined to involve myself in a paper contest, but both I, Captain Smyth, and Mr. Baily were named on the first committee, where we both saw and lamented, that a man of such rough bearing and manners should overawe and govern the society which had thus been formed.

In the autobiography which I am now printing, I may be induced to give a further explanation of this public subject, from papers and dates of the time, as the *Literary Gazette* of May 26th has endeavoured to invalidate my claims to credit in the origination of the Geographical Society.

J. BRITTON.

May 29, 1849.

GUTTA PERCHA.

IN a late number of your journal, No. 323, page 179, you have some remarks as to the right pronunciation of the word "percha," in the article "gutta percha." As I have before me two letters relating to the subject, which may, I think, be considered good authorities, (one from my brother, for many years resident at Sumatra and the adjoining settlements, and a perfect Malay scholar, and the other from a native of that island, a lady, whose husband holds a responsible situation on the spot in the East-India Company's service, and who has also published an essay on the properties and uses of the substance), I take leave to send you extracts for the information of your readers; and I would beg attention to the very injudicious method at present in use for procuring the article, in the hope that a practice so injurious to its future supply may be abandoned before its effect is felt in the market. "The gutta percha is in our forests,* but the people are too indolent to procure it. At Singapore, considerable quantities are brought from the neighbouring islands, but from the injudicious mode of collecting it, that of felling instead of tapping the trees, the supply is likely to decline, unless measures are speedily adopted to remedy the evil." Gutta is the Malay for gum, and percha is properly "runnant,"† but the gutta having been first introduced from Sumatra, which the Malays call "poolow percha," it has gone abroad as Sumatran gum. Gutta percha is *soft*, as in perch, the fish of that name, and is pronounced by the natives thus, gutta-perch-a.

HENRY GARLING.

* "Our forests." The letter is dated Penang, in the straits of Malacca.

† "Runnant." I do not at present know the meaning of this word as here used, though it may be surmised.

BISHOP DUPPA'S ALMSHOUSES.

RICHMOND, SURREY—1661.

THESE almshouses, affording accommodation to ten poor women (each inmate having two rooms), were erected by Bishop Duppa, tutor to Charles II., on the spot where his life was saved, when that prelate was pursued by some of Cromwell's adherents. On that occasion the Bishop made a vow that, if the King were restored to his throne, he would perform some work to the honour of God;—hence this pious work. The charity is under the management of trustees, the present receiver and paymaster, Mr. Wm. Smith, having held that capacity for the last forty years.

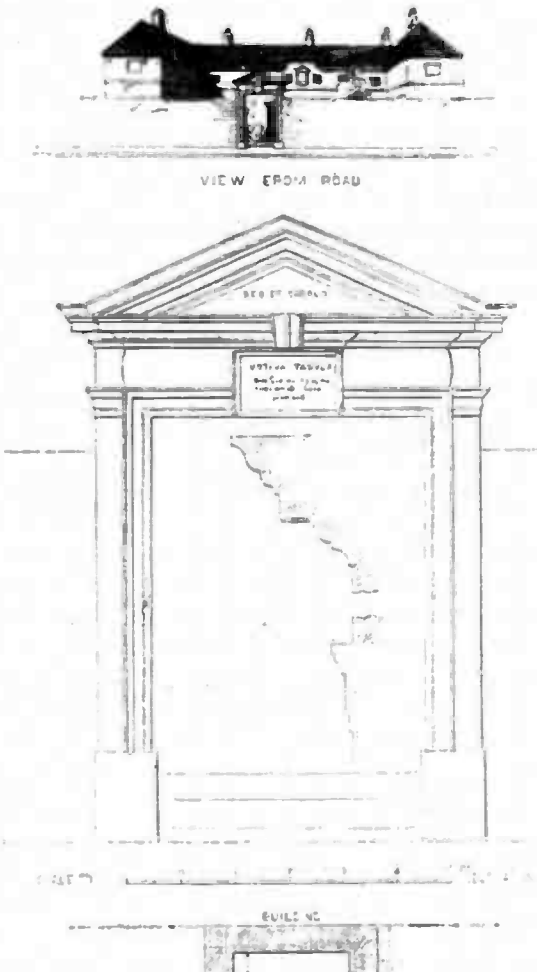
The entrance doorway here represented is a correct and graceful example of Italian architecture, and constitutes a leading feature of the above-named structure, which bears the date of 1661. Sir Wm. Chambers, in his treatise, describes this style of doorway, and says "it is a disposition of Michelangelo. The windows of the capital are of this kind; and Sir Christopher Wren hath executed doors of this sort, under the beautiful semi-circular porches in the flanks of St. Paul's."

The almshouses of this period are well worthy of attention: freed from all ostentation of design, these structures are generally wisely planned and substantially built; and if any display of art is made to enter into the composition, it is ever accompanied by a marked sobriety of feeling. It is to be regretted, in this instance, that the front wall, which had a picturesque appearance, has been pulled down, and a common brick one substituted, and built in a direction wholly irrespective of the building, to which it serves as a screen. Such manifest indifference for works of skill and taste is too frequently exhibited amongst us. When, through imperative necessity, an interesting structure of by-gone times must be demolished, would it be requiring too much at the hands of the destroyers that they should deposit in the public archives of the neighbourhood a correct representation of the doomed structure? For the want, in this instance, of the information which such a document would supply, it is not possible to learn the true character of the demolished portion of the building,—a circumstance the more to be regretted, since it appears to be not improbable that the work in question is from the hand of Inigo Jones. There is something very barbarous in thus consigning to oblivion the thoughts of those whose names are revered by posterity.

A. P. HAKEWILL.

BISHOP DUPPA'S ALMSHOUSES, RICHMOND.

A.D. 1661.



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